

known ambitions but on the basis of judgment and experience. This in essence would provide more doctors to treat the patient as a person.

I sincerely wish to congratulate Dr. Thelander for her intent and endeavors. For a doctor of her years of teaching and practice to endeavor a second review of the medical curriculum without personal gain or ambitions is indeed honorable.

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One Mental Health Approach To Fostering World Peace

To the Editor: A point of view is needed which will allow aggressive individuals who ultimately battle and climb to position of leadership in government to deal rationally and constructively with problems that continually threaten the peace of the world. The current conflict in Vietnam (and most recently in Cambodia) may be taken as a frame of reference. Since we are in the midst of this conflagration, I will not waste time discussing how this might have been prevented. Rather the thrust of this discussion will be how to provide a reasonable basis for removing ourselves from this unwanted situation and how to prevent plunging into similar episodes in the future.

There are several basic problems which we must understand and with which we must deal. These problems are psychological and ones of survival. Let me dispose first of the survival problem that arises from confrontation between nations. The assumption is made that the aggressive nature of man as manifested in government leaders will always operate in such a fashion as to expand into and control environments and communal organizations where there is no marked resistance. Much as nature is said to abhor a vacuum, groups of organized men abhor and appear unable to tolerate unorganized communities. Consequently as long as there are two groups of men who are somewhat organized there will be points of friction where the bound-

aries or spheres of influence of one community rub against the other. The concept of territoriality as noted in lower echelons of the animal kingdom appears to be a general principle that applies to "turf" domination not only in "West Side Story" but in the world at large. One day, perhaps, it will also apply in the universe if other habitable worlds are discovered with creatures like ourselves who have expansive and controlling natures. Unless one of two communities in contact with each other is passive or voluntarily says to the other "Take me into your culture, I want to give up the security of my identity" (almost impossible to imagine) there will be conflict because a basic psychological need is to preserve one's identity. How many of us would willingly change sex, nationality, race, religion or any other characteristic that gives us our identity—no matter how miserable our immediate lot may be? Because of this basic psychological predilection it is clear that a threat to survival, apparent or real, will always remain. The Russians and Chinese and others no more want to be like Americans than vice versa. To deal effectively with this basic disposition and major cause of conflict certain behavioral and policy guidelines must be set forth clearly.

The behavioral guidelines are relatively simple in principle although at times difficult to adopt and implement. The guidelines are (1) we will fight to preserve our identity under threat of being devoured and (2) we will continually try to negotiate with the source of the threat to our physical survival in order to establish a reasonable state of peaceful coexistence. The policy guidelines are more difficult to establish. How do we determine when a threat to physical survival is real and significant? And where do we place the line where we are to make our stand? Obviously these questions are open to argument. One has to consider when making decisions about active and war-like interventions the chances of winning or at least continuing to be able to survive; whether or not the cost—moral, physical and economic—can be sustained; and whether the alternatives to fighting are acceptable to the majority of those affected.

Accepting these dismal (but not necessarily hopeless) guidelines to living in the real world, let me turn to the problem of developing an acceptable rationale for extricating ourselves from the present conflict and preventing ourselves

from becoming immersed in future similar conflicts.

Primary consideration must be directed to the all important psychological factors surrounding the terms "moral commitment" and "saving face" as well as problems of developing a majority opinion which will support critical executive and legislative decisions.

Let me dismiss, cavalierly, the problem of influencing majority opinion. It is mentioned solely so that we don't lose sight of it. This is a vast educational project beset with all the problems of modifying basic beliefs, attitudes, prejudices, immediate emotional rather than rational reactions, misconceptions and perhaps even a certain form of intellectual or information deficit.

I will dwell however on the joint problems of moral commitment and face-saving for therein lies the essence of our current difficulty in being unable to make a complete and rapid withdrawal from Vietnam. The primary suggestion derives from a principle of psychotherapy that I am proposing exists at a national as well as at an individual level. The principle is that organisms have a natural growth potential and drive that bring them to increasingly mature positions. A corollary principle is that the rate of growth toward maturity cannot be affected much beyond that which occurs naturally. It cannot either be slowed or accelerated to any significant degree. To interfere prematurely with great expenditures of time, energy, materials and money, will only cause a grotesque distortion in the organism. These expenditures will invariably be both fruitless and needless.

The implication of these principles is that it is best for an advanced nation not to intervene

in too dramatic a fashion in the affairs of relatively undeveloped nations. If we can recognize this then it becomes clear that we have interfered with and prevented Vietnam and possibly other southeast Asian countries the opportunity to grow and mature naturally. We must admit this error to take a more positive course of action. It might mean that when we back off from our too intimate, premature and overly strong intervention we may witness a certain amount of "deterioration" and "backsliding." Much the same would happen if we gave a young child a growth hormone when it was not indicated and then had to withdraw it once the error in judgment was recognized.

Let us allow the natural evolutionary processes of government and peoples to gain ascendancy and not to be too impatient or too disturbed if the immediate future holds events not to our liking. Let us insist on just one thing—the dignity of human life; that upon our withdrawal from southeast Asia there is to be no bloodbath. Surely the nations of the world can unite on this one point and the United Nations can be given enough teeth to see that this condition is enforced. And it should be enforced for a minimum period of perhaps fifty years. This will allow time, hopefully, for new generations to grow up under relatively stable conditions and help forge a reasonable philosophy of government that reflects a natural national growth process.

Let us encourage and foster this constructive approach to ending the present conflict and preventing future ones.

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